

# ARUBA TODAY

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February 13, 2024  
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Aruba's ONLY English newspaper



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Carnival  
Edition



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## Carnival: That was then....

**Carnival lives mostly in the Caribbean and South America, but originated in Rome, Italy.**

Despite the drinking and partying aspects to Carnival, there are significant religious ties to the history. The festive season always occurs immediately before lent. Around 1650, Lent meant no parties, no good food or drinks, or any celebration of any type for that matter.

The word "Carnival" – Carnaval – is thought to mean farewell to flesh, referencing the Catholic practice of fasting red meat from Ash Wednesday until Easter. In the days leading up to Lent, all the goods, meaning all of the good including meat, dairy, fats and sugar had to be gone! So, you guessed it, the consumption of these delicious items resulted in a giant soiree. This was the beginning of a beautiful,

grand, colorful, loud and bold tradition.

As the popularity grew, a domino effect took full swing and countries with rich religious roots adopted the concept of the fiesta. The "Carnival of Venice" garnered the title of the most famous carnival for the longest time, but nothing lasts forever. Cue in major competition.

The Italian traditions spread



to the Catholic nations of Spain, Portugal and France. From the French, it spread to Germany and soon the Americans and Canadians also got a taste of it and took it in. From Spain and Portugal, Carnival was picked up with Catholic colonization to Latin America and of course, the Caribbean, which would later be one of the few regions where the tradition still thrives to this day.

Around the 1800s, African and Indian slaves and servants from China and India accounted for most of the labor on Caribbean islands. Therefore, their customs were eventually incorporated into the European colonists' tradition of Carnival, which is the root of what you see today.

The introduction of Carnival to the Caribbean is a bit blurred. It is tied to its colonialism, religious conversion and ultimately freedom and celebration. As mentioned above, Italian Catholics in Europe brought the pre-Lent celebration concept when they settled – and brought slaves to – Trinidad, Dominica, Haiti, Martinique and other islands.

Costumes and masks came into play at Carnival back in the day to scare off evil spirits. It was believed in order for people to be granted with good luck, they had to get dressed up. After the grand and elaborate costumes, came music and dance, which was incorporated to petition the gods of nature to grant fertility and health

to the people, plants and animals.

In 1915, when the Royal Dutch Shell Oil Refinery opened on Curaçao, all three of the ABC islands joined forces to celebrate. However, the now-annual tradition was not born then.

In the 1940s, when immigrants from Trinidad came to work in Aruba's Lago Oil Refinery, not only did they bring manpower for the plant, they also brought a thirst for festive celebration in their new home. From there, more and more activities were thought up and organized.

The festival in Aruba was at first, subtler, calmer and relatively quieter. Fast forward to today, crowds fill the streets in the vivacious parades, or are equally as thrilled to be standing on the sidelines watching them.

Every year, Carnival Queens of various age groups are selected representing the antique deities of Mother Nature. Music is integral to the Carnival parades, so a competition is held annually to see which Carnival King reigns supreme.

While Carnival traditions started to dwindle in many parts of the world, Aruba's grew enormously in the 20th and 21st centuries. An extensive amount of festivities have been added over the years, including sunset parade, Jouvert Morning and Lighting Parade.



**Live Entertainment at 8PM**



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### ... and this is now!

Nowadays, you will notice the music got louder, with each Carnival group bringing their own music truck with a band on the streets, to the rhythm of Caiso & Soca.

The costumes have also gotten more elaborate with a variety of stones, sparkles and feathers decorating, as well as portable decorative lights for the night-time parades.

One thing that endures, however, is a love for this tradition which inspires everyone in its reach to let loose, dance, and enjoy!



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## Aruba's Carnival is for everyone!

*Our ministers, members of Parliament and other VIPs also took part in the grand celebrations*



ORANJESTAD – As a visitor, you might have missed some of Aruba's VIPs in the parades and on the side of the road, jamming to the music and enjoying the delightful celebration of Aruba's 70th Carnival.

Among the distinguished participants, Aruban minister of Culture and Finance, Xiomara Maduro participated in the grand parade in full costume, showcasing her love for Aruba's culture and traditions.

Likewise, member of Parliament, Marisol Tromp was also spotted enjoying the festivities!

Director of Setar, our telecommunications company was also in attendance, and you might have seen San Diego Padres' shortstop and Aruba's pride, Xander Bogaerts enjoying the celebration with his family.

Aruba's Carnival is dedicated to everyone, and it is a wonderful time that really brings everyone together on the streets to celebrate our culture and traditions!





**Arnold Malmberg y Jayven Jansen**

**“The Prince and Pancho who most enjoy Aruba’s Carnival”**

**Carnival has certain fixed characters and activities: Momo (the Carnival king or Carnival spirit), Prince and Pancho (the prince and the clown), Carnival queen and princesses, the king or queen of Caiso, Soca and Tumba contest. The Prince and Pancho are chosen as the best jokers, and are awarded the keys to the island for the duration of Carnival season.**

The Prince's main task is to present the Queen to her people upon her election and be her companion in all her activities. The Prime Minister opens the reign of the royal court when she hands the keys to the island to the Prince. Pancho is the personal assistant and best friend of the prince. He is more a jokester, entertaining with his wit and jokes as he accompanies the Prince in all his royal duties. The duo is chosen for their comedy, personality, and popularity.

Each Queen has her own Prince and Pancho, thus there is a pair for each of Children, Youth, Adult and Senior.

Arnold Malmberg and Jayven Jansen were crowned Children Prince and Pancho for Aruba's 70th Carnival.

The preparations to take part in Carnival started last year, but due to various factors back then, the decision was made to spend more time preparing and come stronger to enter the Carnival vibes that are in full-swing.

They competed representing Don Flip Carnival Group, and called them-

selves “Prince Caya Pidi and Pancho Caya Haya”, a play on words for “the streets ask, and the streets receive.”

Dancing to every song that they listen to and participating in Carnival is what they love the most, according to Arnold's mother, Tamara Malmberg, who spoke to our reporter when the pair was receiving their prizes.

Arnold says that he loves feeling the Carnival music, which “is very nice indeed when I dance,” and Jayven loves Carnival so much that he has already told his mother that he wants to also participate in the Tumba contest next year.

Their story is that their families got together to talk, put everything together, and agreed to support the children when they made their own decision to participate. When Carnival began they sat back, friends close to home helped prepare the kids, and here they thank Ryan Rodgers who is the “motor” and the person who prepared Arnold and Jayven for their show.

“They are well prepared, they are smart. They love these crazy things, which means it will be very easy for them. And thus we managed to let the participate and they won the main prize of Children Prince and Pancho for Carnival 70,” Jayven's mother, Heleeny Jansen commented.

Arnold goes to school at Montessori Nos Fortalesa and Jayven at Colegio San Jose Aruba. They are



friends, despite the fact that they attend different schools, as their chemistry helped them seal a good deal. “That was easy, they get along well, and they love acting, they are not afraid of anything. Carnival dancing is something

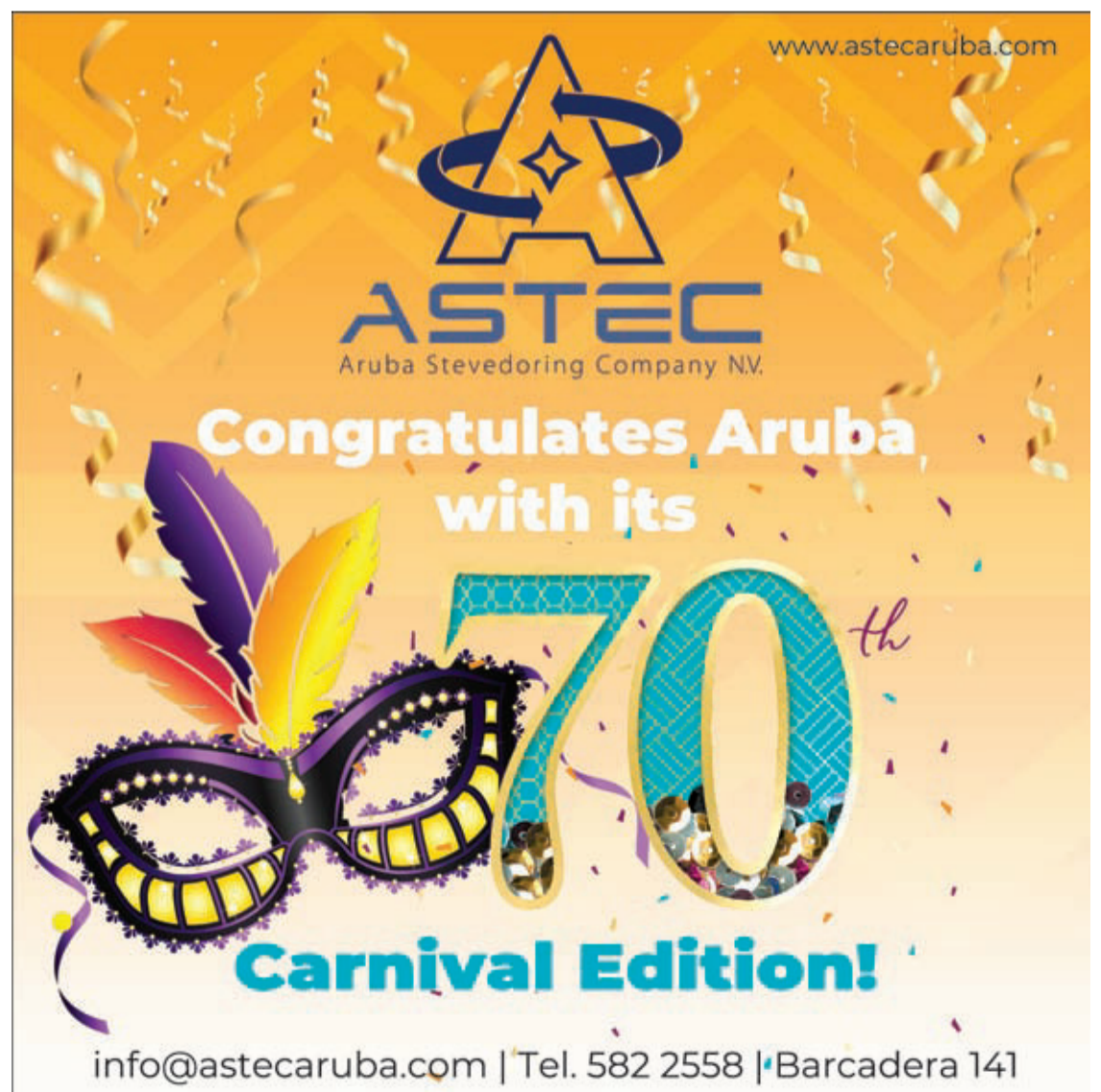
they enjoy. Every year they go to Carnival. Last year they went also with Don Flip, and both won prizes as well. They are not afraid to show themselves, talk or get on stage so it was very easy. For sure we will continue the tradition of Carnival in the following years,”

Heleeny Jansen said.

Among the prizes that they have won in the past, last year Jayven won in the category of Luxury Bodypiece with “Speed Racer” with Don Flip Carnival Group, together with his sister Zoey Jansen who went as “Lego Pricness.”

Jayven had a message for other children who want to participate in Carnival in the coming years: “Work a lot on this process because it takes a lot of work. You have to train a lot, but you will succeed!”

Arnold added: “Children, always remember to enjoy Carnival which has an enjoyable atmosphere!”



## Tecla Hernandez-Kelly: “You have to know what the people want”

**ORANJESTAD – The Foundation for Aruban Carnival, SAC for its initials in Dutch, was the founding organization for Aruba’s Carnival as a national celebration. Behind this powerful organization is Tecla Hernandez-Kelly, a backbone of Aruba’s Carnival history.**

SAC was founded on the 11th of November 1966 at 11:11am. They put together the program of all activities and make sure that all events are carried out perfectly. They also had to make sure that the parades started and ended on time and that they were carried out safely and without major incidents, working together with the police, Red Cross and other organizations and groups. At the end of Carnival season, SAC would hand out awards for the best groups and best costumes and road pieces.

We had a conversation with the president of SAC on occasion of the 70th edition of Aruba’s Carnival. Hernandez-

Kelly told us about her trajectory as a member and president of SAC, her point of view regarding changes related to Carnival, and the direction she sees Carnival taking for the future.

Tecla began her work as volunteer in SAC when she was very young, helping out when she was only 22 years old by searching for candidates for Carnival Queen for the district of Oranjestad. She was heavily involved in the youth activities for Carnival up until around the 80s. During these years, she got the opportunity to enter the group that organized the grand parades, something that she wanted because in this group she could better voice her opinions and ideas.

She says that in the beginning she started as an assistant for the late Milo Croes, former president of SAC. In 2003, Mr. Croes took his retirement as president of SAC, and during the election for a new



president, Tecla won and she began her role as a president for the foundation organizing Carnival.

As for the future, where Tecla sees Carnival going, she emphasizes that from her point of view, a lot of hard work is needed if Aruba wants to continue celebrating Carnival.

She says that back when it was an option for her to stay, she couldn't count with the support of the people, and now that so much has happened, there is a dark cloud on the Carnival celebrations. "Everything was put together and it was going well. This year, see how much has happened, so much. Even though the current president, I know and I see that he tries

his best, he tried but even so there are things that happen. They used to say that when they got rid of SAC all problems would be gone, but problems are never gone."



**AQUA GRILL**

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*Valentines Day Menu*

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## Meet Aruba's Carnival 70th Queen, Gedís Jansen

# “My inspiration and motivation was seeing how many people believe in me and my potential”

**ORANJESTAD – On the 14th of January, Aruba crowned its 70th Carnival Queen, who became Gedís Jansen, representing TOB Carnival Group. In an interview with Gedís, she told us about herself and her participation in the Carnival Queen Election.**

Gedís Jansen is a 24 year old who currently works as a nail technician and make-up artist.

“I come from a humble family as the only daughter in the middle of two sons,” she told us. Her hobbies include modeling, creating make-up looks on herself, and socializing with her close friends and family. She completed secondary school – MAVO and HAVO in the Dutch system – and currently wishes to continue studying here at the University of Aruba in the faculty of Economics.

For Gedís, this was her first time participating in a carnival election, and she told us what inspired her to take part in this traditional celebration. “My inspiration and motivation was seeing how many people believe in me and my potential, and certainly the desire

that I always had hidden ever since I was a child, to see a representation of a girl like me on stage as a queen here in Aruba.”

Preparation for the competition can be grueling, consisting of long hours preparing choreography, speeches and shows. “[The preparation] was something very fun but certainly with stress and a lot of nerves,” Gedís says. “It was a challenge for me in every aspect, but primarily mentally. Presenting a show and a speech where I am the focal point was not something that I enjoy doing, so I had to prepare a lot for these moments.”

However, Gedís never doubted herself and believed she was in it to win it. Answering if she expected that she would win the top title of Carnival Queen, and her reaction and feelings when she was crowned, Gedís says: “My entire preparation period I got it in my head ‘when I am crowned Queen 70’ and not ‘if I am crowned Queen 70’. But the moment they were choosing the 1st Runner Up, I was ready for that as well. The moment

when I realized that I am Queen 70, is one where I am really super proud of myself, that I showed up for so many people, that I just started jumping on stage, fighting the tears of happiness that I had to hold in in that moment.”

Gedís is an inspiration for many, a testament to what can be achieved through will and determination. “Always believe in yourself! You have the ability to achieve everything you set your mind to. The moment you decide to go after what you want, no matter how many people tell you to not do it, you are going to be so proud that you did it, no matter the results.”



Experience Aruban culture with this exciting theme night featuring a Carnival show, mixology bar, local artists and more. You can sample Aruban cuisine, including delicious BBQ options with a tropical twist. A local brass band will be performing, and you can pose with elaborately dressed Carnival dancers for a memorable photo op as well, so don't miss it.

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## Grand Parade Oranjestad



**ORANJESTAD** – Aruba's 70th Carnival was closed with a golden seal, with the Grand Parade in Oranjestad giving all participants the opportunity for one magnificent, glorious and luxurious last hurrah!

As is the custom in Aruba, the final parade of the Carnival season takes place on the streets of Oranjestad, our capital city. This year, the ten participating groups managed to fill the streets with color, festive atmosphere, music and dancing!



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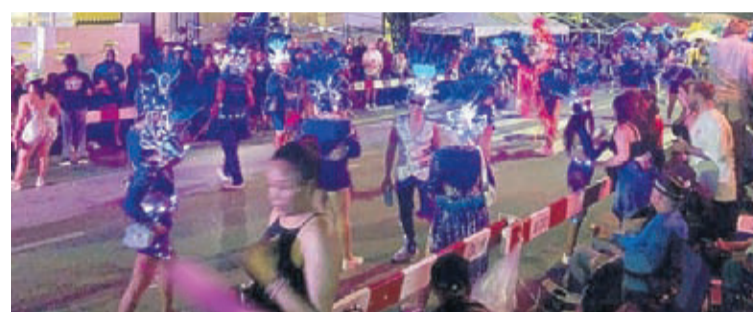
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**Streets of Oranjestad illuminated with the magic of the Lighting Parade for Carnival 70**



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This year, for the grand 70th Edition of Aruba's Carnival, the island celebrated the Grand Lighting Parade Oranjestad in a show of color, music, dancing and of course, lights!

As Aruba is in the midst of the 70th Carnival celebrations, one of the most attractive events is the Lighting Parade, as it takes place at night in a cooler party atmosphere. This year, a total of nine Carnival groups participated, each with its unique theme and colors, but all with a festive ambience.

The group sequence for the parade was:

1. TOB Carnival Group
2. Infinity Carnival Group
3. Royal Carnival Group
4. Empire Carnival Group
5. Champagne Carnival Group
6. Dushi Carnival Group
7. Los Laga Bai Carnival Group
8. OPC Carnival Group
9. Carnival Group

The parade started at the Aruba Entertainment Center in Dakota, passing through Avenida Milio Croes, Vondellaan, LG Smith Boulevard, and ended on the Turbo Roundabout on the Boulevard.



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## Who is “King Momo/Momito”?



(Oranjestad)—This past weekend, to mark the end of the children’s parade that took place Sunday in San Nicolas, locals gathered once more in the evening hours for **Kimamento di Momito (burning of Momito)**. You may wonder who this Momito character is, why he plays a role during the carnival season, and why it’s tradition to set him on fire. Here is a quick folklore

lesson explaining the burning of Momo/Momito on Aruba.

The Momo was first introduced on Aruba in 1954 by Henry Bethencourt (alias Heroudini), three years after its introduction on Curacao. According to Heroudini, the story of the king Momo refers back to the biblical time of Jonah and the Whale, during a time where sins plagued humans. God made it clear to the people that he would destroy the city unless they repented and stopped sinning. And so before the people began fasting, it was decided that there should be a kind of parade to bring closure to that era. In that parade, a masked king was seen walking along the spectators, a figure representing human sins. At the end of the parade, this masked king was burned, symbolizing the end of a sinful era.

Here in Aruba, this biblical story was also adapted into the folklore of King Momo/Momito during the carnival season. Although not as religiously charged, the burning of the king does represent an end to the two-month long festivities, and the



beginning of a new spiritual cycle on the island. The burning of Momo takes place right after the final Grand Parade on the island, right before Lent.

To say goodbye to the carnival season, locals attend two different burnings of the king; First, the “Momito”, which happened this past Sunday after the children’s parade. Momito represents the end to the children’s carnival festivities (the “-ito” refers to something small, a.k.a, children). Momo is the adult version of the momito, and its burning takes place the same day after the final Grand Parade in Oranjestad.

This week will be the “last hurrah” of the carnival season, with the two Grand Parades left on the itinerary. If you want to say goodbye to this year’s carnival season with the locals, join us this coming weekend in San Nicolas and Oranjestad to celebrate the biggest parades yet!

Source: National Archeological Anthropological Memory Management.



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# Grand Parade San Nicolas



**ORANJESTAD – Aruba's 70th Carnival ended with a two-day explosion of dance, costumes and colors and it all began in San Nicolas.**

The best vibes are always in San Nicolas, and Carnival was no different. A total of ten groups took part in the parade, with around 4,300 people taking part on the

road and in the last lap. With luxury, rhythm and fun, Aruba's 70th Carnival was one to remember!

..70th CARNIVAL..

HAPPY

70th Carnival Celebration

Let your local Zjeito shine during our carnival weekend!

..70th CARNIVAL..





# Galloway, EK and Rocco Flava became the big winners of the Caiso & Soca Monarch 2024!



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**ORANJESTAD –** After a musical celebration spanning two nights, Stichting Musica crowned the winners of the fabulous Aruba Caiso & Soca Monarch 2024.

The Aruba Caiso & Soca Monarch event attracts thousands of spectators and is one of the most exciting and popular music events on the island. A favorite of the locals, this event presents a musical extravaganza which sets the tone for the upcoming carnival parades.

The singers compete with original music compositions and lyrics. For Calypso, social commentary is presented with witty and comical lyrics, while the Soca presents a dancing beat and easy lyrics to get the party started on the road!

The most popular songs are featured in the parades and Carnival events.

For Carnival 70, the winners are:

**Winner ACSM Power Soca**  
 Singer: Galloway  
 Title: Mash Up  
 Band: Tsunami  
 Composer: Carl Roosberg  
 Arrangement: Rod Benjamin & Michael Odor

**2nd Place Power Soca Monarch**  
 Singer: M.I.K.E.Y.  
 Title: Unity  
 Band: Youth Xtreme Band (YX3M)  
 Composer: Harvey "Toolz" Agunbero  
 Arrangement: Harvey "Toolz" Agunbero

**3rd Place Power Soca Monarch**  
 Singer: Easy B  
 Title: Another One  
 Band: Tsunami  
 Composer: Shirlan George & Bradley Vesprey  
 Arrangement: Hendry Tromp

**Rookie of the Year**  
 Singer: Big Reckless  
 Title: Big Help  
 Band: Tsunami  
 Composer: Claudius Philips Jr.  
 Arrangement: Claudius Philips Jr.

**Best dressed band:**  
 Tsunami  
 Best Costume: Mitch

**Winner ACSM Caiso**  
 Singer: EK  
 Title: Falta Pottasium  
 Band: Youth Xtreme Band

(YX3M)  
 Composer: Eugene Kemp  
 Arrangement: Harvey "Toolz" Agunbero & Eugene Kemo

**2nd Place Caiso**  
 Singer: Queen Sashah  
 Title: Worries  
 Band: Tsunami  
 Composer: Martha Figueroa  
 Arrangement: Michael Odor

**3rd Place Caiso**  
 Singer: Mighty Tattoo  
 Title: Let It Go  
 Band: Zeta Band Aruba  
 Composer: Richard Quant  
 Arrangement: Hubert Thiel

**Winner ACSM Groovy Soca**  
 Singer: Rocco Flava  
 Title: Come Together  
 Band: Buleria  
 Composer: Claudius Philips  
 Arrangement: Claudius Philips

**2nd Place Groovy Soca**  
 Singer: Easy B  
 Title: Togetherness

Band: Tsunami  
 Composer: Brendon Shalol Joseph  
 Arrangement: Rod Benjamin

**3rd Place Groovy Soca**  
 Singer: Noush  
 Title: Wreckin' The Place  
 Band: Noush & The Band  
 Composer: Randolph Berry  
 Arrangement: Claudius Philips Jr.

Continued on Next Page



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**Galloway, EK and Rocco Flava became the big winners of the Caiso & Soca Monarch 2024!**

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## A quick history of the Jouvert Morning Parade



(Oranjestad)—Last Saturday around 3am, while most people were probably sound asleep, the streets of San Nicolas came alive for its annual Jou-

vert Morning Parade, an essential and highly anticipated parade in every annual carnival season, and one that holds a special place in the hearts of

locals, especially those living in San Nicolas.

The Jouvert Morning Parade, or just “Jouvay”, starts in the middle of the night, usually around 3am, and goes on until the break of dawn. Over the years, Jouvay has not only become a staple in the carnival season, but it has also become one of the few parades that hold a significant cultural meaning for the locals, especially those living in San Nicolas. Here is a quick history lesson on the origins of Jouvay and why it is beloved by many on the island.

The tradition of Jouvay, much like the tradition of carnival in general, has its roots in immigration. Immigrants from other Caribbean islands like Trinidad and Tobago brought this tradition to the streets of San Nicolas, where the community living there—mostly comprised of Afro-Caribbean immigrants due to the industrial boom in the district during the early 20th century—held these “jump-up” parties, complete with steel pan and calypso music.

As the story goes, Jouvay was started on St. Maarten street in San Nicolas, with people bringing home-made instruments like pans, buckets, milk tins etc. to play and dance on the street. Nowadays, people also refer to Jouvay as the pajama party parade, as people can just come and join wearing comfortable, regular clothes. Jouvay is the only parade in the carnival season where everyone is welcome to join the march and dance, accompanied by either one or two bands performing Soca music.

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## Children's Parade in San Nicolas filled with luxury and fun



**ORANJESTAD – On the streets of San Nicolas, children jumped to the beat of carnival music and enjoyed the last Children's Parade of Carnival 70. Carnival mood, luxury and creativity were on display and the people of Aruba enjoyed a wonderful Children's Parade.**

A total of six groups took part in the parade. Centro di Bario Noord opened the parade together with Aruba's Children Carnival Queen, Xeena Dijkhof. There were also a few schools who joined Centro di

Bario Noord to celebrate Carnival. The second group was Champagne Kids Carnival Group with the theme of Universal Studios. Fantasy and luxury stood out with the children dressed as different characters from Universal movies.

The third group was Don Flip Carnival Group, with the theme of Amazonia. Paying homage to nature, the children presented costumes full of color and fantasy.

TOB Kids Group was fourth, showing off their theme from the movie

Coco. Sparkling costumes with luxurious road pieces stood out and represented various aspects of the movie in a beautiful way.

Fifth group was Little Groovers Carnival Group, which this year had as a theme the children's movie Inside Out. The group displayed beautiful costumes expressing different motifs in the movie and the carnival spirit was in full-swing.

Empire Kids closed off the parade with their theme Sapate. A group

that for the first time participated in the Children's Parade and really stood out on the road. Luxurious and creative road pieces stood out and the happy children were dressed as different kinds of shoes.

As is traditional, after the Children's Parade in San Nicolas the burning of the Momito took place in order to bid farewell to the children's parades in Carnival. Aruba as a whole enjoyed a gorgeous parade full of happiness, fantasy and creativity.